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RESPONSE TO TIKRIT INSURGENT INCIDENTS PROVES VALUE OF V CORPS UNIT'S TRAINING OF IRAQI FORCES

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TIKRIT, Iraq — The recent detonation of a car bomb, the discovery of a homemade rocket launcher aimed at this city's center and the capture of four insurgents have proven the value of training and assistance the Soldiers of V Corps' 1st

Battalion, 18th Infantry, have provided to Iraqi military and security forces and emergency personnel here and further convinced coalition forces that the Iraqis will be able to achieve the coalition's goal of turning this nation's security over to its own people.



COURTESY 1ST BATTALION, 18TH INFANTRY
A pair of fire trucks from the Tikrit (Iraq) Fire Department heads to the scene of a car bombing near the city's Iraqi National Police station January 11.

The first incident occurred January 8, when the 201st Iraqi Army Battalion captured four insurgents here.

The battalion, which is conducting training and missions in concert with 1st Infantry Division's Task Force 1-18 Infantry, received intelligence that the four would be passing through Tikrit. Members of the 201st on patrol with troops from the task

force's Charlie Company responded by setting up a "hasty traffic control point." While checking vehicles, the Iraqi soldiers identified the insurgents, who were detained without incident.

Coalition troops also discovered a rocket-propelled grenade warhead and bomb-making material inside the insurgents' vehicle.

The task force's 1st Lt. Jason Gallagher said the rapid and professional reaction of the Iraqi Army was no surprise.

"The proficiency of the 201st Iraqi Army Battalion has improved immeasurably in the time I have been here," Gallagher said. "Their desire to learn will ensure their continued success."

While patrolling the city the morning of January 11, Iraqi police reported a suspicious vehicle was parked near the Tikrit Provincial Iraqi National Police station. As police prepared to investigate, an explosive device in the vehicle detonated.

Officials here believe that insurgents targeting the station, which functions as the operations center for more than 300 local police officers and security forces, set off the bomb prematurely because Iraqi police were aggressively patrolling the area.

Immediately after the explosion, Iraqi security forces and emergency response elements, including the Tikrit Emergency Services Unit, responded to the scene.

The Tikrit Fire Department dispatched two fire engines, and firemen quickly put out the fire resulting from the explosion as ESU personnel secured the scene, allowing

emergency response personnel to evacuate four injured INP officers to the Tikrit hospital for treatment and ensure that vehicle wreckage was cleared from the street. Traffic was quickly moving again in the area.

The Tikrit Joint Coordination Center Security Working Group, a group of local leaders and representatives of V Corps' Task Force Danger, met later to assess the response to the car bombing and discuss ways to improve the reactions to future incidents.

The same day the car bomb was discovered, soldiers from the 201st on patrol north of Tikrit located a rocket launching position in Kadasia containing three S-5K 57mm Soviet-made rockets. The rockets were loaded into a homemade rocket launcher that was aimed at the city. The soldiers notified the JCC and a team of task force and explosive ordnance disposal Soldiers was dispatched to destroy the rockets in place.

The success of the responses to these incidents, task force officials say, is due in large part to the training and mentorship the leaders and soldiers of the 201st, Iraqi security forces and emergency response personnel have received from task force members. Numerous emergency response exercises have been conducted with the V Corps Soldiers, officials say, as well as training in such security tasks as reporting enemy activity, establishing traffic control points, conducting dismounted patrols and defending fixed sites.

